

DR. BILAL PHILIPS

ARABIC READING & WRITING MADE EASY

ENROLL NOW

ARABIC READING and WRITING MADE EASY

by

Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

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TRANSLITERATION

Consonants

ء	'		ض	<u>d</u>
ب	b		ط	<u>t</u>
ت	t		ظ	<u>th</u>
ث	th		ع	'
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	<u>h</u>		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	<u>th</u>		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	<u>s</u>		ي	y

Vowels

اَ	a		اَ	aa
وُ	u		وُ	oo
يَ	i		يَ	ee

Diphthongs

اَ وُ	aw		اَ يَ	ay
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FOREWORD

This book is based on the third edition of the Arabic for non-Arabs textbook published by King Sa'ud University's Language Institute; العربية: أصواتها وحروفها *al-'Arabeeyah: Aswaatuhaa wa Huroofuhaa*¹. It was prepared under the supervision of Dr. Mahmoud Seeneh, a graduate of Georgetown University, U.S.A. The text employs the latest developments in the science of linguistics related to the Arabic language. However, it is completely in Arabic. The book was designed to be taught by Arabs to non-Arabs of varying backgrounds without any intermediary language.

Over the past fifteen years, I have taught Arabic reading and writing to adults and highschool students using a number of different books and methods. From 1991-3, I successfully taught the King Saud University book to officers of the American and British Airforce at Saudia Arabian Airforce Headquarters in Riyadh using English as the intermediary language. I also introduced the book to Sharif Kabunsuan Islamic University, Cotabato City, Mindanao, Philippines in 1993 and taught Arabic teachers at the college how to use it. In the course of teaching the King Saud University text using English as the medium of instruction, I compiled notes on the letters from descriptions used in *Elementary Modern Standard Arabic 1*, edited by Peter F. Abboud. I also modified many of the drills and vocabulary, as well as the distribution of some of the letters and reading rules.

The significance of the King Saud University text is that it does not require the learner to memorize all 28 letters of the alphabet, plus their 112 variations before learning to read and write. It is ideal for adults and older youths, because it develops reading and writing skills gradually and logically. In contrast to the traditional methods based on *al-Qaa'idah al-Baghdaadeeyah* used throughout the Muslim world. The *Qaa'idah* was developed many centuries ago for Arab primary school children, but was adopted by *madrasah's* (religious institutions) throughout the non-Arab

¹ Prepared by Naasif 'Abdul- 'Azeez and Mustafaa Sulayman and first published in 1981. The third edition as in 1990.

Muslim world. Even today, it continues to be the standard text used, from the Philippines to Guyana, South America.

This text is the product of my teaching notes, modifications to the King Saud University book and experience in teaching it through the medium of English. I have added an introduction on the Arabs and Arabic for the interest of the readers, as well as an appendix of Arabic selections for reading practice for those who have completed the course. The selections are from a grade three Arabic reader used in the U.A.E., some sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), and the last nine chapters of the Qur'aan. The letters of the alphabet and reading principles are distributed over eight lessons which are designed to be easily taught over a period of three months, at two hours per week.

Before closing, I would like to thank Ahmad Fat-hi for his diligence in typing the basic Arabic text and my wife, Sakeenah, for revising my English explanations, linguistic descriptions and her valuable suggestions regarding the overall presentation of the lessons. Most of all, I thank Allaah for giving me this opportunity to help others learn the language of the last revelation; the Qur'aan and I pray that He record this effort in my favor.

Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips
Sharjah, U.A.E.
October, 1995

INTRODUCTION : Who are the Arabs?

In prehistoric and pagan times two races inhabited Arabia : one was largely nomadic and wandered with their flocks over the great deserts which lie between the Euphrates river and the centre of the peninsula. The others were the inhabitants of the rain-fed uplands in the south - the Yemen. According to Arab tradition, northern Arabians were 'Arabicized' Arabs² descending from 'Adnaan, while the southern Arabians were 'pure' or 'genuine' Arabs³ descending from Qahtaan.⁴ It was the former who were the 'Arabs' mentioned in ancient records. The earliest surviving account of the people of Arabia comes in the tenth chapter of Genesis, which names the descendants of Noah. Noah's eldest son, Shem, is regarded as the ancestor of the Hebrews, Arabs and Aramaeans - the speakers of 'Semitic'⁵ languages. But the term 'Arab' is not mentioned in Genesis.⁶ So far as is known, the word first appears in an inscription of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III announcing his victory over a group of rebellious chieftains, one of whom is referred to as 'Gindibu the Aribi'. From then on Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions refer frequently to Aribi or Arabu. They were a nomadic people living in the north Arabian desert, and their tribute to their Assyrian overlords was usually in the form of camels, first domesticated in Arabia between about 1500 and 1200 BC. In the Bible the name Arab is the first word used in the second book of Chronicles 17:11⁷ to refer to nomads from the east bank of the river Jordan in the time of King Jehosaphat (c. 900-800 BC). But the term most frequently used for Arabs in the Bible is Ishmaelites. Jewish tradition regarded the Arabs as fellow-descendants of Prophet Abraham. The Jews

² *al-'Arab al-Musta'ribah*.

³ *al-'Arab al-'Aaribah*.

⁴ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol.13, p.813.

⁵ This term was first used by the German historian A.L. Schlozer in 1781.

⁶ However it has been suggested that the 'mixed multitude' (Hebrew *erev*) mentioned in Exodus xii, 38 as having accompanied the Israelites into the wilderness from Egypt could be a mistake for Arabs (Hebrew *arav*). Hebrew, like Arabic, has no written vowels. (See N.Barbour, *Nisi Dominus*, London, 1946, p. 73.)

⁷ '....and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred she-goats'.

acknowledge that Ishmael was the son of Abraham by his second wife Hagar. 'Adnaan was believed to be a descendent of Prophet Ishmael.

An Arab was therefore a nomad inhabitant of the central and northern Arabian peninsula. The word itself is probably derived from a Semitic root related to nomadism. In the Arabic language, the word '*araba*' means 'to cross'. Herodotus and later Greek and Roman authors began to extend the terms 'Arabia' and 'Arab' to cover the whole peninsula and its inhabitants, including the Yemenis of the south-west. The Romans referred to the comparatively fertile region in southwestern and southern Arabia (in present day Asir and Yemen) as *Arabia Felix*⁸ in contrast to *Arabia Deserta* in barren central and northern Arabia and *Arabia Petraea*⁹ in northwestern Arabia.¹⁰ Already the term 'Arab' was broadening.

Inevitably, some of the Arabian nomads began settling down around the oases, where a sedentary civilization was possible. One of these settlements was Yathrib in western Arabia, which became Madeenah after the time of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ); another was Petra, the valley hidden among the bare mountains of south Jordan which in the second century BC became the centre of the powerful kingdom of the Nabataeans. Although the Nabataeans were Arabic in speech, Aramaic in writing, Semitic in religion, and Hellenistic in art and architecture, their culture was synthetic, being superficially Hellenic but basically Arabian, and so it remained.¹¹ Still another settlement was Palmyra in the central Syrian desert, which achieved high prosperity as a trading centre at a junction of caravan routes and ultimately as a great political power in the third century CE¹² under the astute Queen Zenobia. In the south, the Greek writer Eratosthenes (3rd century BC) described *Eudaimon Arabia* (i.e., Yemen) as inhabited by four major peoples; Sabaeans, Minaeans, Qatabanians, and Hadramites. The people who called themselves *Saba'* (biblical 'Sheba') are both the earliest and the most abundantly attested in the surviving written records. Their centre was at Ma'rib, east of present-day San'aa and on the edge of the sand desert. Sabaean rulers - who are mentioned in Assyrian annals of the late 8th and 7th centuries BC - were responsible for impressive

⁸ Literally 'Happy, or Flourishing Arabia'.

⁹ Literally, 'Stony Arabia'.

¹⁰ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol.1, p.508.

¹¹ Philip Hitti, *Syria : A Short History* , London, 1959, p. 61.

¹² CE stands for 'common era' or 'Christian era' in place of AD.

irrigational constructions. The Minaean kingdom lasted from the 4th to the 2nd century BC and was predominantly a trading organization that, for the period, monopolized the trade routes. Their capital was at Qarnaw (now Ma'een). The Hadramite kingdom, the wealthiest of these ancient civilizations, was based on the sale of frankincense and sea trade from India. It occupied the modern Dhofar province of the Sultanate of Oman. Himyarites first appear in recorded history in Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (latter half of the 1st century CE). Their kingdom was in the extreme southwest of the peninsula and had their capital at Tha'faar, nine miles southwest of present-day Yarim on the road from Aden to San'aa. In the last decades of the 3rd century CE a Himyarite ruler named Shammar Yur'ish ended the independent existence of both Saba' and Hadhramaut and the whole of the Yemen was united under his rule. He and his successors were called the Tubba' kings and their rule continued until shortly before the rise of Islaam.¹³

Some time after the rise of Islaam in the first quarter of the 7th century CE and the emergence of the Arabian Muslims as the founders of one of the greatest empires of history, the name 'Arab' came to be used by these Muslims themselves and by the nations with whom they came in contact to indicate all people of Arabian origin. Subsequently, when Arabic replaced the local languages in many countries of the Middle-East and North Africa, the term 'Arab' came to refer to anyone who spoke Arabic as their native language.

Arabic alphabet

The Arabic alphabet is the second most widely used alphabetic writing system in the world (the Latin alphabet is the most widespread). Arabic language was carried across much of the Eastern Hemisphere by the spread of Islaam. The Arabic script has been adapted to such diverse languages as Persian, Turkish, Hausa, Malay, Urdu, Spanish, and Swahili. Although it probably developed in the 4th century CE as a direct descendant of the Nabataean alphabet, its origins and early history are vague. Some scholars believe that the earliest extant example of Arabic script is a royal funerary inscription of the Nabataeans dating from CE 328. Others believe that this epigraph shows characteristics of Arabic but is essentially Aramaic and that the earliest extant example of Arabic is a trilingual inscription in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic dating from CE 512.

¹³ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol.8, pp.815-7.